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## Wildflower Spot – October 2009

### John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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# WOOLGRASS

*Scirpus cyperinus*

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

This perennial sedge grows to 6 feet tall, usually in large clumps, and often in extensive colonies. The leaves are long and conspicuous, especially the basal ones. The flower-heads are large, the branches arching and drooping. In late summer-fall, the 6-12 inch fruit clusters are red-brown and very fuzzy. Woolgrass goes dormant in winter, but adds a good deal of interest with the standing foliage.

Woolgrass is common in wet places, roadside ditches, marshes, swamps and wet meadows. Not limited to soggy areas, it can easily be grown in normally moist flower gardens, effectively grouped with orange coneflower, cardinal flower, hibiscus and Joe-pye weed. The seedheads are particularly attractive against a background of green trees and shrubs. This sedge is native to most counties of Virginia, ranging from eastern Texas to Newfoundland. Blooms July-October.



This is one of several important species of wetland plants that provide food and cover for waterfowl and other wildlife. The seeds are eaten by waterfowl, and the roots by muskrats and geese. Woolgrass is good for erosion control by streams and ponds. ❖

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**Photo:** Woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*) taken by Helen Hamilton in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden in Freedom Park.  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).